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The History of the Know Nothing Party In Indiana

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INTRODUCTION

This study of the Know Nothing party was undertaken at the suggestion of Dr. Logan Esarey at Indiana university. One of the most powerful movements in our political history has received comparatively little attention from historians. This may be due to two causes: first, it disappeared as suddenly and silently as it arose, apparently having had but little permanent effect on our politics or institutions; and second, the traces it left were few.

It is a difficult task to write the history of a secret society from the reports which become public. The newspapers of the time were full of Know Nothing news, but it was the opponents of the order who were so anxious to publish anything they could learn about it. Those who were favorable were pledged to secrecy and pretended to know nothing at all about the organization. The result of this situation is that the Know Nothings must be studied in a great measure from the reports of their enemies.

The records of the various councils would have been the best source, but they seem in practically every instance to have been destroyed when the council disbanded. It has been impossible to gain access to the private papers of Col. Richard W. Thompson and other leaders of the party. Until these become available, we will have to be content with the information that newspapers and contemporary political literature can give.

THE ORIGIN OF KNOW NOTHINGISM

Political nativism in the United States divides itself naturally into three periods. Until 1845 it was a local movement confined largely to New York city. In 1845 it entered the field of national politics, but died out within a few years. Revived under the auspices of the Know Nothing order it became national in 1854, but again after a brief existence it was stifled by the intrusion of a larger issue. It is with the last phase of the movement that this paper is concerned, but for a proper understanding of the subject a brief survey of early nativism is necessary.

Hostility to foreigners and Catholics dates back to colonial days, but as there were few Catholics in the country and immigration was so small as to be almost negligible, the oppo-

sition was based upon theory, rather than upon some ever present danger. After the Revolution a small but steady inflow of Irish Catholics began, most of whom settled in New York city. In 1786 the first Catholic congregation was organized there, the members of which were mostly Irish, who, to the number of several thousand, were settled in one district, forming a community noticeably apart from the native born citizens.¹ They soon became a factor in local politics.

The naturalization question divided the first political parties. The Federalists were strongly anti-alien. The first naturalization law, approved March 26, 1790, required only two years' residence in this country. A few years afterwards the Federalists extended the time to five years and in 1798 to fourteen years. The Democratic party on the other hand was very favorable to foreigners; in fact, it contained a very large element of naturalized citizens. When the Federalists were overthrown in 1800 the naturalization period was promptly reduced to five years (1802).²

The earliest exhibition of hostility toward Catholics came on Christmas eve, 1806. In a riot between a crowd of Irishmen and some non-Catholics in New York city a city watchman who attempted to interfere was killed by an Irishman. Only the arrival of the authorities prevented a general sack of the homes of the Irish Catholics.³ This isolated incident shows how early there existed an antagonism directed against them. The next spring, when some assemblymen were to be chosen, an "American ticket" was put forward, the first attempt at a Native American organization.⁴ This ticket did not prove to be successful.

For several years there was no further manifestation of the latent nativist sentiment, but all the time the Catholic population became more and more numerous until by 1826 they numbered twenty-five thousand in New York city alone. The native born viewed this increase with alarm, which resulted in the first great attempt at organization. In 1834 a series of twelve letters signed by "Brutus" appeared in the *New York Observer*. The real writer was Samuel F. B. Morse,

¹ Scisco, *Political Nativism in New York*, 17.

² Cooper, *American Politics*, 54.

³ Scisco, *Political Nativism in New York*, 18.

⁴ Cooper, *American Politics*, 54.

later the inventor of the telegraph, who, in a recent visit to Europe, had learned of the existence of the Leopold Foundation, a Catholic organization intended to promote church expansion in America. As the letters of "Brutus" voiced an alarm felt by many, steps were taken toward the formation of an organization, which in July of 1835 received the name of the Native American Democratic Association. The principles of the movement, as declared in its platform, were: opposition to office holding by foreigners, to pauper and criminal immigration and to the Catholic church on the ground that that church was a political machine.⁵ For the November elections of that year, 1835, the Whigs united with the new movement, beginning an alliance that was to last throughout the career of nativism in the state. But their combined forces were defeated. The next spring Samuel F. B. Morse ran for mayor, unsupported by the Whigs, and polled about fifteen hundred votes.⁶ In 1837 Aaron Clark, supported by a combination of natives and Whigs, was elected by a plurality of three thousand three hundred, together with a common council of the same politics. But the nativist movement was ruined by the fusion, and absorbed by the Whigs in the hour of victory.⁷

For a number of years nativism again was inactive. Then in June, 1843, a new organization was formed in New York city, which, in February, 1844, took the name, American Republican Party.⁸ In the spring election of 1844 this organization succeeded in electing its candidate for mayor and the greater part of the city council.⁹ The movement by this time had spread throughout New York state and similar organizations had been formed in Boston, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and New Orleans; each of which cities, in 1844, elected in whole or in part, an American Republican municipal government.¹⁰ In May and July of 1844, the great Kensington and Southwark riots, a number of conflicts between Americans and Irish, took place in Philadelphia, which lost much sympathy to the cause

⁵ Scisco, *Political Nativism in New York*, 26.

⁶ Scisco, *Political Nativism in New York*, 29; Whitney, *Defences of the American Policy*, 240, says nine thousand, evidently an exaggeration.

⁷ Scisco, *Political Nativism in New York*, 31.

⁸ Carrol, *Great American Battle*, 264. Whitney, *Defence of the American Policy*, 244.

⁹ Carrol, *Great American Battle*, 265.

¹⁰ Whitney, *Defense of the American Policy*, 247-8.

of nativism.¹¹ In the November elections of 1844, the Americans again carried New York and Philadelphia, electing mayors in both cities, and sending six representatives to the twenty-ninth congress, four from the former city and two from the later.¹²

The purposes of the American Republicans, as given in an appeal issued by their executive committee of the city and county of New York were as follows:

1. To extend the time of naturalization (to twenty-one years).
2. To guard from corruption and abuse the proceedings necessary to obtain certificates of naturalization.
3. So to instruct and form public opinion, as to give native citizens an equal chance at least with foreigners to obtain office and lucrative employment.
4. To prevent the exclusion of the Bible from the use of schools.
5. To prevent riots, the violation of our laws, the desecration of the American flag and the shooting and murder of peaceable citizens when in the exercise of their undoubted rights.
6. To resist any further encroachments of a foreign civil and spiritual power, upon the institutions of our country.
7. To prevent all union of church and state.¹³

A convention met in Philadelphia, July 4-7, 1845, to perfect a national organization. Fourteen states were represented.¹⁴ The convention issued an address and a declaration of principles and named the new party the "Native American."¹⁵

The Native American party, however, was a failure. Each year it declined. A second national convention, scantily attended, met at Pittsburgh, then adjourned to Philadelphia, in 1847, where Zachary Taylor and Henry Dearborn were recommended for the presidency and the vice-presidency. But no campaign was made and the Native American party passed out of existence.¹⁶

¹¹ Lee, *Origin and Progress of the American Party in Politics*, 42 et seq.

¹² Cooper, *American Politics*, 54.

¹³ *The Crisis*, 8. Address of the Executive Committee of the American Republicans of Boston, 12. Proceedings of the Native American State Convention of Pennsylvania, 8, 15.

¹⁴ Indiana was represented but the names and number of delegates are not stated. Lee, *Origin and Progress of the American Party in Politics*, 229.

¹⁵ Whitney, *Defense of the American Policy*, 252.

¹⁶ Whitney, *Defense of the American Policy*, 256.

The passing of the Native American party left the field open for a new factor in American politics, the secret political society. There were many of these associations, but two stand out above all others in importance, namely, the Order of United Americans, commonly called the O. U. A., and the Order of the Star Spangled Banner, the Know Nothing order.

Of these the Order of United Americans was the first in the field. It was organized in New York city, December 21, 1844, and adopted the weapon of secrecy.¹⁷ Expansion was slow but steady. By 1850 chapters were organized in Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and California. In 1854-55 the order appeared in nearly all the western and southern states.¹⁸ The O. U. A. was a social and beneficial society, with no program of political conduct. The secrecy extended only to the signs and ceremonies connected with its work. There was a uniform ritual for all chapters, but there were no degrees.¹⁹ In government, the chapters or local organizations were grouped into a State Chancery, which was the legislative head, consisting of three delegates from each chapter. The Arch-Chancery, in turn, was the national legislative head, consisting of three delegates from each State Chancery. The presiding officer in each chapter was called the Sachem. The O. U. A. was thrown into the background by the rise of the Know Nothing order. It reached its height of prosperity in 1855, when it was represented in sixteen states. After that date it declined rapidly.²⁰

The Native Sons of America was another society formed in December, 1844, in New York.²¹ The United Daughters of America, organized in New York city, November 27, 1845, was a woman's auxiliary to the O. U. A.²² The Order of United American Mechanics originated in Philadelphia in 1845. Its purposes were:

(1) Mutual aid and benevolence; (2) the reformation of the naturalization laws; (3) to oppose pauper foreign labor.²³

¹⁷ Carrol, *Great American Battle*, 252.

¹⁸ Whitney, *Defense of the American Policy*, 258-264, 272.

¹⁹ Scisco, *Political Nativism in New York*, 70.

²⁰ Whitney, *Defense of the American Policy*, 265-272.

²¹ Scisco, *Political Nativism in New York*, 64.

²² Carrol, *Great American Battle*, 258.

²³ Whitney, *Defense of the American Policy*, 312. Carrol, *Great American Battle*, 258.

The United Sons of America organized in Philadelphia in 1845.²⁴ Two societies, the Benevolent Order of Bereans, and the American Protestant Association, were founded by "Orangemen," protestant Irish whose antipathy to the Catholics exceeded, if possible, that of the native born Americans.²⁵

The Order of the Star Spangled Banner, or Order of the Sons of the Sires of '76, was conceived and planned by Charles B. Allen of New York city, who had never been associated with any of the other nativist societies. As early as 1849, he prepared his plan, but did not begin his work until the next year. Drawing a little group about him, he formed a secret organization whose qualifications for membership were far more restrictive than the O. U. A. Secrecy was specific and stringent. The plan of action was to control, rather than to make nominations, by concerted action in favor of such nominees of other political parties as might be agreed upon. It cost nothing to acquire and hold membership. At first there was no stated place of meeting. A private home or lodge room might be used.²⁶

After two years the little group numbered scarcely thirty. Then, under new leaders, steps to increase the membership were taken, and a thousand new members were secured in four months. Regular weekly meetings were instituted. This reorganization took place in April, 1852.²⁷ All this time the existence of such an organization was entirely unknown to the general public. In the local elections of 1852 and still more in 1853 it was able to take a decided stand. Then, in the latter year, its existence first became known²⁸ and for lack of a better name was dubbed the "Know Nothing Order" and under that name the Order of the Star Spangled Banner continued its career.

A revival of nativism came in the years 1853-54. The story of the imprisonment of the Madiari family in Tuscany for reading the Protestant Bible, it was said, roused the horror

²⁴ Whitney, *Defence of the American Policy*, 315.

²⁵ Scisco, *Political Nativism in New York*, 68.

²⁶ Carrol, *Great American Battle*, 268. Whitney, *Defence of the American Policy*, 281-2.

²⁷ Whitney, *Defense of the American Policy*, 283.

²⁸ *Indianapolis Journal*, Aug. 22, 1853.

of the Americans.²⁹ Catholic bishops were said to be attacking the American non-sectarian school system. In 1853 Father Alessandro Gavazzi, a priest and revolutionary, came to America for the purpose of agitating against the Catholic church. He was received in the same manner as Kossuth. On October 29-30 he spoke in Indianapolis on the evils of the Church of Rome, against Catholic schools, and of the horrors of the Inquisition.³⁰ At the same time, the lack of tact of Bedini, papal *nuncio* to the United States, who came to settle a dispute between the New York archbishop and the members of the diocese, roused American feeling.³¹ The thought that the ambassador of a foreign prince should have power to settle disputes between Americans was repugnant to most of our citizens.

The Know Nothing Order, taking advantage of these circumstances, realized its ambition of becoming national. A system of national, state and local councils was adopted and other arrangements for a widespread and numerous organization.³² The work of expansion was rapidly carried out and by the early part of 1855, every state and territory in the Union had been organized.³³

On May 14, 1854, a general convention met at New York city in which seven states and the District of Columbia were represented. It adjourned after making arrangements for a fuller gathering later.³⁴ On June 14 a Grand Council met in New York city at which thirteen states were represented.

²⁹ Whitney, *Defense of the American Policy*, 95. *The Sons of the Sires*, 31.

³⁰ *Indianapolis Journal*, Nov. 1, 1853.

³¹ *Indianapolis Journal*, Feb. 7, 1854. *The Sons of the Sires*, 32.

³² Whitney, *Defense of the American Policy*, 283.

³³ The organization of the order in the several states occurred in the following order, according to Whitney, *Defense of the American Policy*, 84. New York, April 4, 1852; New Jersey, April, 1853; Vermont, Maryland, May, 1853; Connecticut, July, 1853; Ohio, October, 1853; Massachusetts, November, 1853; Pennsylvania, December, 1853; District of Columbia, January, 1854; New Hampshire, Indiana, February, 1854; Rhode Island, Maine, March, 1854; Alabama, April, 1854; Georgia, Illinois, May, 1854; Michigan, June, 1854; Iowa, July, 1854; Kentucky, Wisconsin, North Carolina, August, 1854; Missouri, Louisiana, Oregon, September, 1854; South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Delaware, October, 1854; Mississippi, November, 1854; California, Texas, Fall 1854; Florida, Arkansas, December, 1854; Minnesota, May, 1855; New Mexico, Kansas and Nebraska in 1855. See also *Madison Courier*, Sept. 23, 1857; *Indianapolis Journal*, Aug. 22, 1853; *Rushville Republican*, May 17, 31, 1854; *New Albany Ledger*, June 7, 1854; Carrol, *Great American Battle*, 269-70.

³⁴ Carrol, *Great American Battle*, 270.

The following officers were elected:

James W. Barker, president, New York City; W. W. Williamson, vice-president, Alexandria, Va.; Charles D. Deshler, corresponding secretary, New Brunswick, N. J.; James M. Stephens, recording secretary, Baltimore, Md.; Henry Crane, treasurer, Cincinnati, Ohio; John P. Hilton, inside sentinel, Washington, D. C.; Henry Metz, outside sentinel, Detroit, Mich.; Samuel P. Crawford, chaplain, Indianapolis, Ind.³⁵

On June 17, the delegates completed the organization of the order by adopting a constitution and a new ritual.³⁶ Under their hands the Grand Council became a permanent body, holding jurisdiction wherever the order spread. After making arrangements for a second Grand Council to be held at Cincinnati, November 15, 1854, the convention adjourned.³⁷

The causes of the success of nativism were due to (1) the increase in the volume of immigration, and (2) the growth in power and influence of the Catholic church.

The increase in immigration, due to the potato famine in Ireland and the political unrest in Germany, presented a real problem to the United States. This is shown by the following table:³⁸

From 1790 to 1810 -----	120,000
From 1810 to 1820 -----	114,000
From 1820 to 1830 -----	103,979
From 1830 to 1840 -----	762,369
From 1840 to 1850 -----	1,521,850
Total for the entire 60 years -----	<u>2,722,198</u>

The following table shows the rapid increase during the first half of the decade 1850-1860:

From June 1, 1850 to Dec. 31, 1851-----	558,000
In the year 1852 -----	375,000
In the year 1853 -----	368,000
In the year 1854 (estimate) -----	<u>500,000</u>

Aggregate for four and one-half years ---- 1,801,000

³⁵ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Sept. 18, '54. Carroll, *Great American Battle*, 271.

³⁶ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Sept. 18, 1854. Carroll, *Great American Battle*, 271.

³⁷ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Sept. 18, 1854.

³⁸ *The Sons of the Sires*, 189. *The Crisis*, 15-23. Appendix to *Congressional Globe*, 33 Congress, 2 Session, 51.

The assimilation of such a mass of an element entirely different from the native stock threatened the homogeneity of the people, which was considered essential to a permanent nationality.³⁹ The pauper and criminal element among the immigrants was believed to be large. The states of Europe were thought to make a regular practice of ridding themselves of their undesirables by paying their passage to America.

The commissioners of the poor in England recommend that Parliament pass an act authorizing the different parishes in England to raise money for the purpose of sending the most vicious and worthless of their parishes—such as are irreclaimable—out of that country to this!

Such is a passage quoted from *Niles Register*.⁴⁰ Such charges may or may not be true, but it is certain that they were made often and with great effect.⁴¹ It is also certain that the proportion of paupers and criminals among the foreign born was much larger than among the native born.⁴²

The immigrants remained a class apart, forming their own settlements and retaining their own habits and customs, many of which were repugnant to the Americans. The lax observance of the Sabbath customary on the continent shocked our people in a day when Puritanism was still a strong sentiment. The foreigners had their own political associations, societies, militia companies and clubs.⁴³ Their liberal views upon the liquor question won the enmity of the "Maine Law" men, for the temperance movement was then at its height. It was felt that the foreigners were the rumsellers, and were the most active in the opposition to the proposed reform.⁴⁴

³⁹ Whitney, *Defence of the American Policy*, 69.

⁴⁰ *The Crisis*, 24.

⁴¹ *The Sons of the Sires*, 68. Carrol, *Great American Battle*, 107. *The Crisis*, 24-34. New Albany Tribune, Feb. 15, 1855.

⁴² *The Crisis*, 28. Whitney, *Defence of the American Policy*, 180, 358.

⁴³ Whitney, *A Defence of the American Policy*, 175, gives the following as the articles in the platform of a German society in Richmond, Va. (summarized).

a. Abolition of all neutrality. Intervention in favor of every people struggling for liberty.

b. Reform in religion; abolition of laws for the observance of the Sabbath; of prayers in Congress, of oath upon the Bible.

c. The establishment of a German university and instruction in the German language.

See also, Logansport *Journal*, June 24, July 15, 1854. *The Crisis*, 50-55.

⁴⁴ Brookville *Indiana American*, June 16, 1854.

But it was the political activity of foreigners that gave the natives the greatest cause for alarm. The catering of politicians to secure their vote was notorious. Candidates for office were chosen for their availability to catch the foreign vote.

If he had an ear "for the sweetness of the German accent and the richness of the Irish brogue" he was put upon the course of the presidential race.⁴⁵

The naturalized citizens held the balance of power between the two old parties.⁴⁶ They cast over a quarter of a million votes in 1852, in an election in which a change of thirty-nine thousand votes would have elected Scott instead of Pierce.⁴⁷ Kossuth once said to some German-Americans:

You are strong enough to effect the election of that candidate for the presidency who gives the most attention to the European cause.⁴⁸

A large portion of the foreign vote was venal. The native born felt that an element foreign in origin, ignorant and irresponsible, and secret in its character, cast the deciding vote in the elections.⁴⁹

The Know Nothings tried to make it clear that they bore no enmity to foreigners as such and did not desire to deprive them of their rights.⁵⁰ Representative N. P. Banks of Massachusetts expressed this on the floor of the House:

I bear no enmity to foreigners * * * But if they hold as the supreme head of secular power the Pontiff of Rome, and consider that he can in any case absolve them from their allegiance * * * to the United States * * * if they understand that their interests are separate from those of American citizens, if they take direction from their spiritual guides in political matters, and by preconcerted and private arrangements, form associations, and make parties of their own, seeking to obtain and hold the balance of power, throwing their weight first into one scale and then into the other * * * they will force upon American citizens the alternative either to make similar combinations against them, or to abdicate the seats of political power.⁵¹

⁴⁵ *The Sons of the Sires*, 46.

⁴⁶ *Terre Haute Union*, Sept. 1, 1857.

⁴⁷ Appendix to *Congressional Globe*, 33 Congress, 2 Session, 52.

⁴⁸ Whitney, *Defence of the American Policy*, 338.

⁴⁹ *New York Times*, Dec. 6, 1854. *Logansport Journal*, March 16, 1856.

⁵⁰ *The Sons of the Sires*, 116. *Brookville Indiana American*, May 11, 1855.

⁵¹ Appendix to *Congressional Globe*, 33 Congress, 2 Session, 52.

The more conservative opponents of the Know Nothings recognized this fact.

Were foreigners to discard the dictation of self-appointed leaders among themselves, abandon their own national organizations, disregard all causes which bound them together or separated them from one another in the old country, we confidently believe that we should no longer hear of Know Nothing or Native American politics.⁵²

The second great cause of nativism was the fear engendered in the minds of Protestant Americans by the growth of the power and influence of the Catholic church. The growth of that church may be seen from the following table:⁵³

	1808	1855
Bishops -----	2	40
Archbishops -----	0	7
Priests -----	68	1,704
Missionary stations -----	0	678
Churches -----	80	1,824
Ecclesiastical institutions -----	2	37
Colleges -----	1	21
Female academies -----	2	117
Adherents -----	very few	2,500,000 (in 1851)
Papal provinces -----	0	7

The hierarchical system of the Catholic church with its infallible head roused the fears of the native Protestants for the safety of their free institutions. Romanism was believed to suppress intelligence, adjudicate by the inquisition, muzzle the press and forbid discussion, favor absolutism and pronounce liberty of conscience a wicked heresy.⁵⁴

There is not in the annals of mankind, any example of such perfect despotism, exercised not only over monks shut up in the cells of a convent, but over men dispersed among all the nations of the earth.⁵⁵

The increase of purely Catholic societies, schools, and colleges set them apart from other citizens. Of all their associations the Jesuits were the most feared. "When Jesuitical conjurers * * * follow * * * it behooves us to organize even secret societies."⁵⁶ The whole Roman system was

⁵² New Albany Ledger, June 21, 1854.

⁵³ Whitney, *Defence of the American Policy*, 116-17.

⁵⁴ Whitney, *Defence of the American Policy*, 95.

⁵⁵ "Sam", or the History of a Mystery, 533.

⁵⁶ Rushville Republican, May 17, 1854.

looked upon as a great conspiracy to ensnare Protestant America. The Roman schools were regarded as designed not so much to promote education as to make converts to popery.

The papal conspiracy is represented to be of a far more insidious character than has been surmised, * * * we fear the story is not without foundation.⁵⁷

The Roman church was believed to be an active political agent, still insisting on its mediaeval claims of temporal supremacy over every nation and people of the earth. Under the organization of the Jesuits the Catholic vote was presumed to be cast solidly for the candidate most favorable to them.⁵⁸ In 1852 both parties had bid for the foreign and Catholic vote. The question seemed to be, which of the two candidates and of the two parties was most favorable to the Catholics and foreigners.⁵⁹ A purely Catholic political ticket was not unknown. In 1841 a separate ticket was nominated by a mass meeting of Irish Catholics in New York city. The purpose of this "Carrol Hall" ticket was to rebuke the Democrats. The result showed that the balance of power lay in their hands.⁶⁰ Reflecting on the activity of the church and the attitude of the old parties, the native Protestants thought that the Roman church was striving directly to establish its temporal or political power in the United States.⁶¹

THE BEGINNING OF THE KNOW NOTHING MOVEMENT IN INDIANA AND THE CAMPAIGN OF 1854

The secret work and ritual of the society which afterward came to be called the Know Nothings seem to have been brought to Indiana in the month of February, 1854, when the first lodge was organized at Lawrenceburg in Dearborn

⁵⁷ Rushville *Republican*, May 17, 1854.

⁵⁸ Appendix to *Congressional Globe*, 33 Congress, 2 Session, 52. *The Crisis*, 72-80.

⁵⁹ Indianapolis *Journal*, July 1, 10, 13, 1852; Brookville *Indiana American*, June 16, 1854; *The Sons of the Sires*, 46. Terre Haute *Union*, Sept. 1, Oct. 8, 1857.

⁶⁰ Carrol, *Great American Battle*, 263.

⁶¹ Whitney, *Defense of the American Policy*, 71.

county.¹ The organization spread rapidly, penetrating every part of the state, but all the while keeping its movements shrouded in the utmost secrecy. During March and April it reached the towns of southern Indiana, local organizations being formed at Versailles,² Madison and New Albany. By the end of spring its mysterious presence was felt in the towns of central and northern Indiana.

The details of the organization of the society cannot be told fully, for the traces it left were few. None of the organs of public opinion were openly used to advance its propaganda. From curious, enigmatical posters in Lafayette the uninitiated could surmise that the Know Nothings were abroad in their city.³ Diamond shaped pieces of paper scattered about on the streets of Madison and even pasted on the door of the *Courier* office were the only intimation that the society was at work there.⁴ The *Terre Haute Journal* said:

Is there a Know Nothing wigwam among us? No doubt exists that regular meetings of the society are held here from time to time. They are banded together in opposition to naturalized citizens, especially to those of the Catholic faith.⁵

Democratic editors were especially active in their attempts to expose the progress of the order. "We understand that a 'Wigwam'⁶ of the Know Nothings was established in town last night," said the *Rushville Jacksonian*. "It is a rehash of Native Americanism, gotten up on such a scale that Whig politicians can follow their instinct by joining without being exposed." The *Republican*, replying in a manner common to those editors favorable to the Know Nothings, accused the Democrat of being the real Know Nothing, saying:

¹ Whitney in *A Defence of the American Policy*, 284, makes the statement that the order was introduced into Indiana by the formation of a state council in Feb., 1854. This is undoubtedly a mistake as it is positively stated in Know Nothing sources that the state council of June 11-12, 1854, was the first. He probably had the date of the organization of the first lodge in mind. See the *Indianapolis Journal*, March 18, 1854, Aug. 9, 1860; *Indianapolis Sentinel*, July 31, 1856; *Brookville Indiana American*, Nov. 2, 1855.

² *Brookville Indiana American*, April 7, 1854.

³ *New Albany Tribune*, April 25, 1854.

⁴ *Madison Courier*, June 7, 1854.

⁵ *Madison Courier*, June 14, 1854.

⁶ The proper term is "council". The O. U. A. was organized into "wigwams" or "lodges" and in popular speech these terms were frequently applied to the Know Nothing councils.

We understand he went to Indianapolis for the purpose of joining, although we don't know anything about it, more than that his instincts would naturally lead him that way.⁷

The Evansville *Enquirer*, denouncing the Know Nothings bitterly, announced their appearance in that city in June. The New Albany *Tribune*, now becoming recognized as very favorable to Know Nothingism, retorted that such abuse would make the order rapidly increase.⁸ "Like an ill-omened bird of night," said the Logansport *Democratic Pharos*, giving an account of the organization of a branch there, "this society, afraid to meet the light of day, and honestly avow its purpose, holds its gatherings in secret."⁹

The Know Nothing question held a leading place of interest in the newspapers of the time. Editors favorable to the movement, although they invariably denied all connection with the organization, commented with obvious pleasure upon its vigorous and rapid progress. The "old line" Democratic editors, fearing the approach of this new secret political association that had already become such a powerful factor in the east, printed anything that tended to discredit the movement or to expose its proceedings.

The name of no man of prominence is connected with the extension of the order over the state. The work was accomplished by obscure men. Not many politicians were willing to identify themselves with such a movement while it was in its infancy, although they were willing enough to make use of it when its political strength began to be revealed. Judge William J. Peaslee, president of the council at Shelbyville, was actively engaged during the spring and summer of 1854 in organizing subordinate councils throughout central Indiana.¹⁰ Samuel Brown, of Boone county, was prominent as an organizer in his own district.¹¹

Quietly the Know Nothings worked their way throughout the state until they were numbered by thousands. By May, 1854, three months after their appearance, one of the national leaders, Lewis C. Levin, of Philadelphia, boasted that

⁷ Rushville *Republican*, May 3, 1854.

⁸ New Albany *Tribune*, June 20, 1854.

⁹ Logansport *Journal*, June 24, 1854.

¹⁰ Indianapolis *Chapman's Chanticleer*, Oct. 5, 1854.

¹¹ Lebanon *Boone County Pioneer*, Sept. 15, 1855.

thirty thousand names were on the rolls of Indiana "wigs;" enough to constitute the deciding factor in future elections.¹² With a rapidity unequalled in our whole political history their progress continued until by July they could claim a membership of sixty thousand and were still daily increasing in numbers.¹³ They were proportionately strongest in the southern part of the state. In Dearborn county they claimed a majority; in the city of Madison alone the number was variously estimated at from five to twelve hundred.¹⁴ The old "Burnt District" (then the Fifth congressional) soon became a Know Nothing stronghold. At least three councils were located in Indianapolis. In the northern part of the state Know Nothingism never gained so firm a foothold, yet in the one county of LaPorte there were five subordinate councils.¹⁵

A brief survey of the political situation in Indiana in 1854 here becomes necessary. Parties were in a state of flux. The Whigs, as an organization, had practically ceased to exist after their disastrous campaign of 1852. They had largely drifted into the ranks of the Know Nothings. The Free Soil movement, at its height in 1848, had had its vote cut in half in 1852, but still obtained strong support in central and northern Indiana. The radical Abolitionists were a mere handful, but, because of their activity, they exercised an influence far out of proportion to their numbers. The "Maine Law" temperance men were an important factor in politics although the agitation was not at the high pitch of a few years previous.

The Kansas-Nebraska Bill, which passed the House March 22, 1854, split the Democratic party. The major portion, the "Old Liners," remained true to their party affiliations and followed the lead of Pierce and the administration. A smaller fraction, whose antipathy toward the extension of slavery overcame the strength of their party ties, severed relations with the Old Liners and became known as Anti-Nebraska Democrats.

¹² Indianapolis *Sentinel*, May 27, 1854.

¹³ New Albany *Tribune*, July 17, 1854.

¹⁴ Madison *Courier*, June 14, 1854.

¹⁵ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Nov. 5, 1854.

This same situation existed throughout the north. These diverse elements of the opposition united for the campaign of 1854 in nearly all the northern states. This movement marks the birth of the Republican party, although in 1854 it received that name in but a few states. In other states fusion tickets known as People's or Anti-Nebraska, were formed, the various elements of the opposition uniting on the common ground of enmity to the further expansion of the slave power.

In Indiana as elsewhere there was a movement for a Fusion or People's party. The Know Nothings, perhaps the strongest of all the elements of the opposition but not strong enough to run a ticket of their own, determined to act with the Fusionists, to control the whole movement and to direct it in their own interests. In this they were merely following the usage of their brethren in the eastern states when the party was weak there. As a result their program was carried out with astonishing success, for during the entire canvass of 1854 the invisible machinery of Know Nothingism governed the Fusion movement—its nominations, its active organization and its campaign.¹⁶

A state convention was called for July 13, 1854, by the Fusionists to meet in Indianapolis, for the purpose of uniting on a common People's ticket. The Know Nothings, now that a sufficient number of councils had been organized to hold a state council, secretly decided to hold their state convention at the same place on July 11-12.¹⁷ Their next step was to secure control of the election of delegates to the Fusion convention. In this they succeeded. Probably three-fourths of the Fusion delegates chosen were Know Nothings.¹⁸ The men thus openly elected to the Fusion convention were then secretly nominated by the Know Nothing county councils to their own convention. Thus it happened that the members of the state council secured control of the People's convention.

The Know Nothings engaged the Masonic hall for July 11, 12 and 14.¹⁹ The windows were blinded and an attempt

¹⁶ Turpie, *Sketches of My Own Times*, 153; *Rockport Democrat*, July 28, 1855; *Indianapolis Journal*, July 24, 1855.

¹⁷ *Indianapolis Chapman's Chanticleer*, July 20, 1854.

¹⁸ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, July 27, 1854.

¹⁹ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, July 12, 1854.

was made to keep the proceedings secret, in which they were quite successful for the time being, although one of the younger editors of the *Sentinel*, Mr. Austin H. Brown, climbed upon a small building in the rear of the hall and succeeded in identifying several members before he was detected and dislodged from his position.²⁰

Among the well known delegates were Godlove S. Orth, Godlove O. Behm, and W. G. Terrel, of Lafayette, the latter the editor of the *Lafayette Journal*; Judge William J. Peaslee, of Shelbyville; Reuben A. Riley, of Greenfield (father of James Whitcomb Riley); Dr. James N. Ritchey, of Franklin; Milton Gregg, editor of the *New Albany Tribune*, and Rev. Lucien W. Berry, president of Asbury University. The exact number of delegates present is unknown but the hall was said to be crowded.²¹ A complete council would have consisted of one delegate from each county council. Judge Peaslee was president of the council.²² Many other prominent politicians connected with the Fusion movement found business in Indianapolis while the Know Nothings were in session but disclaimed any connection with them.

Seeing a crowd going into Masonic hall, thinking it was an anti-Nebraska meeting, went in too, and we were seen coming out, for the very good reason that we were not allowed to stay in; but if the very respectable men and good citizens we saw in the hall and left in it were Know Nothings, we have no objection to be called one.²³

Berry Sulgrove, editor of the *Indianapolis Journal*, was present at the convention and wrote blandly that it was only a caucus of anti-Nebraskaites, which was no doubt the truth but not the whole truth.²⁴

Details of the proceedings are lacking. The first session was held on the afternoon of July 11, at which time a state constitution was reported and adopted, along with a ritual and a set of rules and regulations.²⁵ As these documents are dis-

²⁰ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 15, 1854, Aug. 9, 1860; *Brookville Indiana American*, July 21, 1854.

²¹ *Brookville Indiana American*, July 21, 1854.

²² *Indianapolis Sentinel*, July 13, 1854.

²³ *Madison Courier*, July 19, 1854.

²⁴ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 15, 1854; *New Albany Tribune*, Aug. 1, 1855.

²⁵ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Sept. 18, 1854.

cussed in the following chapter and are given in the appendix, they will not be dealt with here.

The council nominated a state ticket which the Know Nothings planned to have renominated by the convention of the 13th and appear as if brought out by the latter.²⁶

The officers elected for the ensuing year were:²⁷

President, Godlove S. Orth, Lafayette; vice-president, J. H. Cravens, New Marion, Ripley county; secretary, Rev. Samuel P. Crawford, Indianapolis; treasurer, E. H. Barry, Indianapolis; chaplain, Rev. James Havens, Rushville; mashall, Elias Thomasson, New Albany; sergeant-at-arms, John T. Wallace, Bowling Green.

On the 13th this board of officers drafted a set of orders.²⁸ This ended the work of the first Know Nothing state convention.

The People's convention met July 13. Many of the delegates to the secret conclave of the Know Nothings now took their seats in the People's convention. All the various elements of the opposition, the Anti-Nebraska Democrat, Whig, Free Soil, Abolition, Maine Law and Know Nothings, were represented. The Fusion papers however, refrained from mentioning the Know Nothings as forming a factor. They did not care to have that known. The convention organized by electing Thomas Smith, of Ripley county, a former Democrat, president, with a number of vice-presidents and secretaries which included men of all the factions.²⁹ A leading Know Nothing, Dr. James Ritchey, was one of the vice-presidents. A committee on resolutions was appointed, on which Judge Peaslee acted.

The one common object which had brought them together and which united them, namely the restoration of the Missouri Compromise, was expressed in a platform of resolutions; a more radical minority report of George W. Julian being voted down.³⁰

²⁶ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, July 27, 1854; Logansport *Journal*, Oct. 7, 1854; New Albany *Tribune*, Aug. 1, 1855.

²⁷ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Sept. 18, 1854.

²⁸ See appendix.

²⁹ Indianapolis *Journal*, July 15, 1854.

³⁰ Logansport *Journal*, July 22, 1854. For this slight Julian never ceased denouncing the Know Nothings.

The convention then proceeded to renominate the following ticket slated by the Know Nothing conclave, as though it was being brought out spontaneously.³¹ The party affiliations of each as given are taken from the *Sentinel*.³²

For secretary of state, Erasmus B. Collins, of Dearborn county. (Free Soil, Maine Law, Know Nothing.)

For auditor of state, Hiram E. Talbot, of Putnam county. (Maine Law, Know Nothing.)

For treasurer of state, William R. Nofsinger, of Parke county. (Free Soil, Maine Law.)

Judge of the supreme court, Samuel B. Gookins, of Vigo county (Whig, Free Soil, Maine Law.)

Superintendent of common schools, Prof. Caleb Mills, of Montgomery county. (Whig, Free Soil, Maine Law.)

Recommending this ticket to the people of the state, the convention adjourned, feeling that the work of uniting the many factions of the opposition was well under way.

This ticket and the method of its nomination did not please the more radical anti-slavery men, such as George W. Julian, but both the platform and ticket were suitable to the Know Nothings. Julian says of the convention:

The platform, however, was narrow and equivocal, and the ticket nominated had been agreed on the day before by the Know Nothings, in secret conclave, as the outside world afterward learned.³³

Also in his Raysville speech, July 4, 1857, he said:

The Know Nothings were pleased (in 1854) not only because they liked the platform but because the state ticket publicly nominated at the same time had been formed by the order in secret conclave the day before, as the outside world has since learned.³⁴

Julian denounced the Know Nothings in the bitterest invective, and did not want them in the People's party. In his *Recollections* he says:

Pretending to herald a new era in politics in which the people were to take the helm and expel demagogues and traders from the ship, it reduced political swindling to the certainty and system of a science.

³¹ New Albany *Tribune*, Aug. 1, 1855.

³² Indianapolis *Journal*, July 22, 1854.

³³ Julian, *Recollections*, 144.

³⁴ Julian, *Speeches*, 130.

It drew to itself, as the great festering center of corruption all the known rascalities of the previous generation, and assigned them to active duty in its service. It was an embodied lie of the first magnitude, a horrid conspiracy against decency, the rights of man, and the principle of human brotherhood.³⁵

He was also the principal exponent of the conspiracy theory, the belief of the abolitionists being that the whole Know Nothing movement was created by southern slave holders for the sole purpose of diverting popular interest from the anti-slavery agitation into a new and less dangerous channel.

Its birth, simultaneously with the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, was not an accident, as any one could see who had studied the tactics of the slave holders. It was a well-timed scheme to divide the peoples of the free States upon trifles and side issues, while the South remained a unit in defense of its great interest. It was the cunning attempt to balk and divert the indignation aroused by the repeal of the Missouri restriction, which else would spend its force upon the aggressions of slavery; for by thus kindling the Protestant jealousy of our people against the Pope, and enlisting them in a crusade against the foreigner, the South could all the more successfully push forward its schemes.

On this ground, as an anti-slavery man, I opposed it with all my might from the beginning to the end of its life.³⁶

To the believers in the conspiracy theory, the opposition of the Know Nothings to foreigners appeared as an attempt to discourage immigration to the north, and thus prevent the north from outstripping the south in population. They saw the invisible hand of the slave holding aristocracy of the south attempting to preserve the political equilibrium of the sections.³⁷

The more moderate anti-slavery men were alarmed at the rise of Know Nothingism, fearing that it would crush out the anti-slavery movement in the north.³⁸ Horace Greeley foresaw that while it would temporarily divert public opinion from the slavery question, it did not contain enough elements of permanence to be dangerous. As he said:

³⁵ Julian, *Recollections*, 140. It evidently failed in part of its duty with respect to demagogues.

³⁶ Julian, *Recollections*, 141.

³⁷ Ft. Wayne *Standard*, April 19, 1855.

³⁸ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Dec. 9, 1854.

It would seem devoid of the elements of persistence as an anti-cholera or an anti-potato-rot party would be.

The Maine Law temperance men also believed that Know Nothingism was inimical to their own movement.³⁹

To the views of the northern radicals it is interesting to oppose those of the southern Democrats. To the latter the movement in the north was Abolitionism in a very thin disguise. Representative O. R. Singleton, of Mississippi, said on the floor of the House:

They are all Free Soilers or Abolitionists * * * Show me a single resolution passed by them in a subordinate lodge, or in Grand Council, which repudiates Abolitionists, or Abolition sentiments, or expresses a willingness to acquiesce in the provisions of the Kansas-Nebraska act, or the fugitive slave law.⁴⁰

The "Old Line" press in the north also tried to stigmatise the movement as an abolition order, or at least controlled by an abolition majority.⁴¹

The true attitude of Know Nothingism toward slavery was not expressed correctly by any of the views given above. The order in its primitive character and purpose wished to ignore entirely the issue of free soil and slavery, which it considered to be sectional.⁴² Know Nothingism, on the other hand, they wished to make a national issue.

The American organization is not a local institution; it extends east, west, north and south, and an entire repudiation of everything like abolitionism was necessary to preserve its integrity and unity. This independent nomination (i. e. Ullman for governor of New York) therefore, is a guarantee to our southern friends that whatever the parties of the North may do, the patriotism of the masses knows no distinction between North and South.

Their theory was correct. As long as the slavery question was rapidly dividing the political parties, the churches and the Union itself into opposing camps, the Know Nothings could not commit themselves to one side or the other and remain national.

³⁹ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Dec. 9, 1854.

⁴⁰ Appendix to *Congressional Globe*, 33 Congress, 2 Session 267.

⁴¹ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Nov. 4, 1854.

⁴² Whitney, *Defence of the American Policy*, 298; Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Dec. 18, 1854; Appendix to *Congressional Globe*, 34 Congress, 1 Session, 1192.

But Know Nothingism in Indiana did not quite conform to this theoretical non-committal position. In the councils of central and northern Indiana, both the leaders and the rank and file were men with strong opinions on the slavery question. Only in the southern portion were the "national" Know Nothings in a majority. Thus in 1854 the state organization was controlled by men with free-soil views. Throughout its brief history the fortunes of the Know Nothing movement in Indiana were largely determined by its relations with the anti-slavery element.⁴³

The Democratic party held its state convention at Indianapolis, May 26, 1854. Already the strength of their new secret foe was known and feared. The following resolution, aimed at the Know Nothings, was introduced by Dr. B. F. Mullen, a Roman Catholic:

That the Democracy of Indiana, still adhering to the constitution of the Confederacy, openly and avowedly condemn any organization, secret or otherwise, that would aim to disrobe any citizen, native or adopted, of his political, civil, or religious liberty.⁴⁴

It passed without opposition. The *Journal* commented that though it did not fully understand the resolution it must be aimed at the Know Nothings, "a set of gentlemen of whom every person talks and about whom they 'Know Nothing'."⁴⁵

The Democrats made the campaign of 1854 chiefly against Know Nothingism. Governor Joseph A. Wright attacked it severely, claiming in a speech at Indianapolis that he had succeeded in breaking up sixty Know Nothing wigwams. Ex-Lieutenant-Governor Jesse Bright, Dr. Graham N. Fitch, of Logansport, and the other Democratic campaign orators handled the Know Nothings very vigorously.⁴⁶ They were called the "party with one idea," the "dark lantern party," "owls," "birds of night," "midnight conspirators" and such opprobrious terms.

Since the principles of the party were secret its opponents could attack only its secrecy and its manifest opposition

⁴³ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Nov. 1, 1854; Ft. Wayne *Standard*, Nov. 30, 1854.

⁴⁴ Madison *Courier*, June 7, 1854; New Albany *Ledger*, June 20, 1854; Indianapolis *Sentinel*, July 31, 1856; Brookville *Indiana American*, June 9, 1854.

⁴⁵ Indianapolis *Journal*, May 26, 1854.

⁴⁶ Indianapolis *Journal*. Oct. 14, 1854; Apr. 21, 1858; Oct. 21, 1854; Sept. 2, 1854.

to Catholics and foreigners. The secrecy of the movement threw it open to many charges. It was un-American and was preventive of a free and true expression of the voice of the people at the ballot box.⁴⁷ Secrecy gave an appearance of cowardice. Instead of the heretofore frank, open methods of American politics, an unjust, exclusive, anti-democratic means of gaining elections was adopted. The anti-Papal program was construed as mere bigotry and the anti-foreign creed was held to be unfair to the naturalized citizens.⁴⁸

The Whig party practically had ceased to exist by 1854. From its former ranks the greater part of the Know Nothing strength in Indiana was recruited.⁴⁹ The Free Soilers and Maine Law men constituted a considerable portion. Godlove S. Orth, Richard W. Thompson, William K. Edwards, Schuyler Colfax and Solomon Meredith were old Whigs. Besides there was a small percentage of Anti-Nebraska Democrats, of whom Will Cumback was the most conspicuous example, in the Know Nothing councils.⁵⁰ All the elements of the People's party were represented in the movement. Yet many anti-Nebraska men, such as Oliver P. Morton, were repelled by their secret measures, their opposition to the Catholic church and their desire to exclude foreigners from the suffrage.⁵¹

The tactics which the Know Nothings used to secure the nomination of their candidates by the People's convention of July 13 were pursued in district and local nominating con-

⁴⁷ A comparison of the presidential vote of 1852 with that of 1856 proves conclusively that the major portion of the Know Nothings in Indiana came from the ranks of the Whigs. Buchanan's strength, allowing for the increase in population in the four years, was practically the same as that of Pierce in 1852. The Fillmore and Fremont vote combined equalled approximately that cast for Scott in 1852. The result in the following counties is illustrative:

County	Pierce	Scott	Buchanan	Fremont	Fillmore
Clark -----	1812	1186	1950	492	1074
Floyd -----	1815	1328	1767	228	1262
Gibson -----	1127	942	1286	365	766
Lawrence -----	1113	1054	1126	480	660
Ohio -----	455	432	505	104	379
Orange -----	1022	747	1207	49	606
Switzerland -----	1147	1134	1121	228	1040

The Indianapolis Journal, Dec. 6, 1852, and Dec. 3, 1856; see also Indianapolis Sentinel, June 14, 1854, and Julian Recollections, 141.

⁴⁸ Indianapolis Sentinel, May 24, 1854.

⁴⁹ Indianapolis Sentinel, Nov. 1, 1854; Indianapolis Journal, May 25, 1854.

⁵⁰ Rushville Republican, Aug. 30, 1854; Richmond Jeffersonian, Aug. 31, 1854.

⁵¹ Foulke, Life of Morton, I, 43, 44.

ventions throughout the state. The Democrats and other opponents charged the Know Nothings at the time with making use of these subtle means, and although the latter denied the facts at the time, they later confessed to the truth of the accusation.

The same invisible power was found at work in the nomination and election of congressmen in nearly every district in the State.⁵²

Mr. Cumback (in the Fourth district) was nominated by a Know Nothing convention in the first instance, and we know that Mr. Slaughter, the candidate against Mr. English in the Second district, was first nominated by a Know Nothing caucus.

We have no doubt every anti-Democratic candidate in the state, unless it be Mr. Dunn, was brought out in the same manner * * * Cumback, Holloway, Barbour, Scott, Mace, Colfax, Brenton and Pettit are all Know Nothings.⁵³

In the "Old Burnt District" a Fusion convention met at Cambridge City. The Know Nothings attempted to nominate Morton, but as he was not willing to connect himself with their organization, they secured the nomination of D. P. Holloway, editor of the *Palladium*.⁵⁴ Harvey D. Scott in the Seventh district was the nominee of a Know Nothing convention in Terre Haute, August 3, 1854.⁵⁵ Thomas C. Slaughter, of Corydon in the Second district was likewise chosen in secret conclave and confirmed by a People's convention.⁵⁶

A call was issued by William J. Peaslee, chairman of the Sixth district Fusion committee, for a convention to be held at Indianapolis, August 3, to nominate a candidate for congress. Messrs. J. P. Chapman, former editor of the *State Sentinel*; William Sullivan, and Lucien Barbour, were designated to procure a suitable place.⁵⁷ It is interesting to note that three of these men at least, Peaslee, Chapman, and Barbour, were prominent Know Nothings. Following their usual

⁵² New Albany *Tribune*, Aug. 1, 1855.

⁵³ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Jan. 21, 1856, Sept. 2, 1854.

⁵⁴ Foulke, *Life of Morton*, I, 42.

⁵⁵ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Oct. 6, 1854.

⁵⁶ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Sept. 2, 1854.

⁵⁷ Indianapolis *Journal*, July 22, 1854.

tactics the "dark lantern party" secured the nomination of Mr. Barbour. During the campaign Mr. Barbour and his opponent, Thomas A. Hendricks, made Know Nothingism the issue, the one appealing to that sentiment as strongly as the other opposed it.⁵⁸

The same methods were followed in the counties. In Marion county a ticket prepared by a secret Know Nothing meeting on September 16, was ratified to a man by the Fusionists on September 20. Every man on the ticket was claimed to be a member of the order.⁵⁹ The council of Wayne county fixed up a ticket on September 16 that was introduced and nominated, with two exceptions, by the People's convention at Centreville, one week afterwards.⁶⁰ The same thing happened in Floyd county.⁶¹ In Dearborn county the People's convention nominated a ticket that had been selected by a secret council of Know Nothings, even though in the meantime the Lawrenceburg *Register* had secured possession of and published the names.⁶²

An insight into the political workings of the Know Nothing lodges at this time is afforded by the minutes of the Milton lodge, Wayne county, which came into the possession of the Richmond *Jeffersonian* and were made public.⁶³ An entry dated September 8, 1854, records that a committee of three from each ward was appointed "to attend to forming a ticket for corporation officers." On September 15th it is stated that said committee "reported the following ticket," etc. On the same date occurs a most important entry which confirms the dictation to the People's party by the Know Nothings in Wayne county referred to above:

On motion the Council went into the election of delegates to the County Council, which resulted in the election of the following persons: Henry Voglesong, E. Roberts, James L. Allen, and H. B. Sinks; County Council to be held at Richmond on the 16th of September.

On motion of Dr. Kersey, the delegates be instructed to use their best efforts to promote the permanent interests of the organization.

⁵⁸ Holcomb and Skinner, *Life of Hendricks*, 163-164.

⁵⁹ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Sept. 21, 1854.

⁶⁰ Richmond *Jeffersonian*, June 21, 1855.

⁶¹ New Albany *Ledger*, Aug. 30, 1854; Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Sept. 2, 1854.

⁶² Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Oct. 7, 1854.

⁶³ Richmond *Jeffersonian*, July 5, 1855.

The next entry, dated September 18th, reads:

Council was called by the president, for the purpose of letting the committee report the proceedings of the County Council which was held on the 16th instant. They report the Council met, and appointed the following officers: J. B. Dinsmore, president; Nim. H. Johnson, vice-president, and that the greatest harmony prevailed. They then went into the selection of a ticket for state and county officers which resulted in the following: (Here follows what was called the "People's Ticket" with two exceptions). Which report was unanimously adopted, and the members agreed to support the ticket nominated by the People's Convention on the 23d inst.

Such was the procedure. First delegates were appointed to the council at Richmond—a county council, hence similar proceedings must have been transpiring in the subordinate councils all over the county. Next a special meeting was called to hear the report of these delegates, which embodied as the result of the main action of the county council the precise ticket, with slight exceptions, introduced as original at the so-called People's convention one week afterwards. Finally the Milton council agreed to support the ticket nominated by the People's convention of the 23d inst. five days before such convention had any existence.

In the light of such testimony there can be no question of the activity of the Know Nothing machinery. Moreover such proceedings were not peculiar to Indiana. It was the method of control planned by the founders of the order and had been practiced elsewhere with great success.

While there was no authorized publication of the Know Nothing platform the main principles were beginning to be pretty well known. The following platform is given by an organ of the Fusion party that was more than favorable to Know Nothing principles:

1. Repeal of all naturalization laws.
2. None but native Americans in office.
3. A pure American common school system.
4. War to the hilt on Romanism.
5. Opposition, first and last, to the formation of military companies composed of foreigners.
6. The advocacy of a sound, healthy and safe nationality.
7. Hostility to all Papal influence, in whatever form, and under whatever name.
8. American institutions and American sentiments.

9. More stringent and effective emigration laws.
10. The amplest protection to Protestant interests.
11. The doctrines of the revered Washington and his compatriots.
12. The sending back of all foreign paupers landed on our shores.
13. The formation of societies to protect all American interests.
14. Eternal enmity to all who attempt to carry out principles of a foreign church or state.
15. Our country, our whole country, and nothing but our country.
16. And finally, American laws and American legislation, and death to all foreign influence, whether in high places or low.⁶⁴

Briefly, Know Nothingism professed to oppose and annul the influence of the Roman Catholic church over the institutions and affairs of our country and to break up the subserviency of American politics and politicians to foreign influence. Its advocates asserted that they

desired to return to the pure Americanism of the Republican Fathers, and the administration of national affairs upon principles as understood by them.⁶⁵

After the constitution of the grand council became known in the fall of 1854 the object became definitely known,

The object of this organization shall be to resist the insidious policy of the church of Rome and other foreign influence against the institutions of our country by placing in all offices in the gift of the people, or by appointment, none but native born Protestant citizens.⁶⁶

The Know Nothings claimed to bear no enmity to foreigners as such, but only to their misuse of the privileges given them here. This position is well stated in a communication signed "Know Nothing" in the *Journal*.

We wage no war on the elective franchise of the foreigner. We oppose or denounce no man's religion. We interfere with the right of no man, native or foreigner, to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

But we do oppose, and we will battle till we destroy, that accursed party practice, which lays the institutions of our country at the feet of the ignorant, the debauched, and the un-Americanized subject of any and every European king. We do not think that a mere voyage across the Atlantic * * * qualifies a man to hold our offices, or make our

⁶⁴ Brookville *Indiana American*, May 26, 1854; *Indianapolis Journal*, July 8, Sept. 2, 1854.

⁶⁵ *Logansport Journal*, March 15, 1856.

⁶⁶ See appendix. Constitution of the Grand Council, Art. 3, Sec. 1. *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Sept. 18, 1854.

laws or even to control us in doing either. We want men to know our country, and its Constitution, to have some stake, some home, some abiding place in it, and we have determined * * * it shall be done.⁶⁷

In Indiana the Nebraska question clouded the Know Nothing issue. The congressional campaign was fought out principally on this question. The party in the state as a whole was heartily opposed to the Kansas-Nebraska bill although there were exceptions.⁶⁸ The temperance question aided in complicating the congressional campaign. Will Cumback in a speech at Manchester, Dearborn county, frankly declared he did not want the vote of any foreigner, of any man who favored the Nebraska iniquity, or who was opposed to the search, seizure, confiscation, and destruction of all intoxicating drinks.⁶⁹

Mention has been made of the curiosity aroused by the mystery of the secret order and the attempt to spy on the Indianapolis convention. The attempts to discover and expose them have no parallel in the history of our secret societies. Consequently the Know Nothings had to take the utmost care to preserve the secrecy of their meetings. The signal for a meeting was given by scattering bits of paper cut or colored in such a manner as to designate the place and time.⁷⁰ They met usually in some secluded place, well guarded. In Bloomington while the council was weak, they met in the midst of a field where there was a tall growth of fennel. One lodge near Crawfordsville had its headquarters in a deserted house in the woods.⁷¹ A lodge near Georgetown, bothered by espionage, met at night in a cornfield. Finding themselves surrounded by eavesdroppers one night, at a given signal they suddenly put out the lights and charged their unwelcome visitors who fled and troubled them no more.⁷²

A series of exposures⁷³ was the result of this espionage upon

⁶⁷ *Indianapolis Journal*, Oct. 21, 1854; see also *New Albany Ledger*, June 21, 1854; *Logansport Journal*, June 24, 1854.

⁶⁸ *Indianapolis Indiana Republican*, Aug. 9, 1855; *Madison Courier*, Sept. 6, 1854.

⁶⁹ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Aug. 29, 1854.

⁷⁰ *Madison Courier*, June 7, 1854; *Indianapolis Journal*, Mar. 18, 1854, April 5, 1855; *New Albany Ledger*, Apr. 4, 1855.

⁷¹ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, June 4, 1855.

⁷² *Indianapolis Journal*, Sept. 2, 1854.

⁷³ *Brookville Indiana American*, Apr. 7, 1854, Sept. 22, 1854; *Indianapolis Journal*, May 30, 1854; *Indianapolis Chapman's Chanticleer*, Oct. 5, 1854.

"Sam" or the "Cayennes" as the Know Nothings were popularly nicknamed. Most of them were false, consisting of conjecture and popular report. Finally authentic copies of the constitutions of the grand, state, and subordinate councils, and the ritual were secured from a drunken friend of "Sam" and the whole was published in the Indianapolis *Sentinel*, September 18, 1854.

It was natural that a bitter enmity should be aroused between the Know Nothings and the lower class of foreigners and Catholics in the country. Unscrupulous politicians courting the support of that vote told the foreigners that the Know Nothings wished to disfranchise all foreigners and either kill or drive them out of the country. Taking this literally many Germans and Irish went armed. There is at least one instance in Franklin county where several Germans attended a funeral armed with Bowie knives to defend themselves against the murderous Know Nothings⁷⁴ At this time there were great construction camps of Irish laborers along the railroads then being built. It was not at all safe for a man of native American opinions to go near them, for they held a bitter hatred against the Know Nothings. To intimate that any one was a Know Nothing was sufficient to set the Irish on them in all their fury. Riots and assaults on individuals were common.⁷⁵ The Germans of Franklin county prepared to go armed to the polls on election day.⁷⁶

By the end of September, 1854, the Know Nothings claimed to number eighty-seven thousand in the state.⁷⁷ There is no way of verifying the claim but it cannot be greatly exaggerated. There were councils in practically every town and community in the state, possibly as many as five hundred.⁷⁸ The strength of the individual councils ranged from a few members up to several hundred. The strength of the one in such a small place as Milton, Wayne county, rapidly increased from the original nine to one hundred thirty. Because of their close organization they were even more powerful than their numbers warranted. The balance of political power was in

⁷⁴ Brookville *Indiana American*, Sept. 29, 1854.

⁷⁵ Stormont, *History of Gibson County*, 97.

⁷⁶ Brookville *Indiana American*, Sept. 29, 1854.

⁷⁷ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Sept. 26, 1854.

⁷⁸ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Nov. 5, 1854.

the hands of "Sam." The way to political preferment was through a Know Nothing "wigwam" and to oppose nativism was to commit political suicide.⁷⁹

The election came on October 10, 1854. There was considerable rioting. The Know Nothings of New Albany and Jeffersonville were charged with importing bullies from Louisville, who assaulted foreigners and Roman Catholics to prevent them from voting.⁸⁰ It is certain that "brass knuckles" were used to help carry the election, but it is impossible to fix the blame for such happenings. All the charges do not come from one side. Irishmen were accused of using violence against the "Natives."⁸¹

It was certain that "Sam" was very active on the day of the election, but it was not until the returns came in that it was discovered just how successful he had been. Although the Know Nothings had nowhere openly run tickets of their own, the thorough manner in which they controlled, almost monopolized, the People's movement was now so well known that its victories were reported indiscriminately as Fusion, or Know Nothing successes. Nine out of the eleven Fusion candidates for congress were elected,⁸² of whom every one with the possible exception of George G. Dunn in the Third district were Know Nothings.⁸³ George Dunn, Will Cumback, David P. Holloway, Lucien Barbour, Harvey D. Scott, Daniel Mace, Schuyler Colfax, Samuel Brenton and John U. Pettit were the men sent to congress by Know Nothing support. In but two rockribbed Democratic districts, the first and the second, were the Old Liners successful, where Smith Miller and William H. English were re-elected. The Indiana delegation in the existing congress consisted of ten Democrats and one Whig.

⁷⁹ Logansport *Democratic Pharos*, May 7, 1856.

⁸⁰ Baird, *History of Clark County*, 11; Indianapolis *Sentinel*, May 21, 1855; New Albany *Ledger*, May 23, 1855.

⁸¹ Stormont, *History of Gibson County*, 97.

⁸² Indianapolis *Journal*, Oct. 14, 1854.

⁸³ Logansport *Democratic Pharos*, Sept. 22, 1858; Madison *Courier*, Dec. 24, 1856; New Albany *Ledger*, May 16, 1855. A list of one hundred twenty members of congress elected as Know Nothings is given in the *Congressional Globe* (Appendix, 34 Congress, 1 Session, 352) in the speech of Representative Smith. In it every one of the nine fusion members from Indiana is listed as a Know Nothing. Representative Mace showed his nativist sentiments when he objected on the floor of the House to Witte's resolution against secret political associations. See the *Congressional Globe*, 33 Congress, 2 Session, 571.

The People's state ticket was also triumphantly elected by a majority of about thirteen thousand.⁸⁴ Among the Know Nothings elected to the state senate were David Crane of Floyd and P. S. Sage of Ohio and Switzerland.⁸⁵ To the house they sent David Kilgore of Delaware, who was elected speaker, James W. Hervey and Horatio C. Newcomb of Marion, David Cain of Switzerland, Solomon Meredith and Charles H. Test of Wayne, and Robert N. Hudson of Vigo.⁸⁶

In the county and city elections over the state they were equally successful. Princeton, New Albany, Covington, Salem, Logansport, Lafayette, Indianapolis, and Crawfordsville were among the places which the followers of "Sam" helped to carry.⁸⁷

Both the Fusionists and their opponents attributed the outcome of the election to the Know Nothings. The *Journal* said:

There was a universal impression somewhere yesterday that the horrible "Know Nothings" were responsible for the very unexpected result of the election, but nobody assumed the responsibility of averring of his own knowledge that such was the fact. * * * Not an infrequent accompaniment of their cheerful looks was a mysterious and to our ears, silly inquiry about "Sam" and whether anybody had seen him and chuckles over the "sucks in" that "Sam" seems to have practiced on our Slaveite friends. * * * The Know Nothings are, as usual, charged with this result, and so far as we can learn with great justice. There can be little doubt that a vast majority of all the native born citizens of the State, are unchangably hostile to the subserviency to foreigners, which for years has been the disgrace of the country, and the defeat of right and truth.⁸⁸

An organization, admitted to be a controlling power in the State, suffered itself to be abused, maligned and persecuted * * * without retorting, explaining, or contradicting. * * * It has had no organs, no canvassers, no friends among prominent men, but it has put the schemes of the shrewdest to shame, and the forces of the strongest parties to flight. * * * Politicians have not controlled it.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Indianapolis *Journal*, Oct. 21, 1854.

⁸⁵ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Oct. 26, 1854, contains the official vote.

⁸⁶ *Senate Journal* for 1855, 3-4.

⁸⁷ *House Journal* for 1855, 3-5.

⁸⁸ New Albany *Tribune*, May 8, 1855; New Albany *Ledger*, May 9, Oct. 17, 1855; Rockport *Democrat*, Apr. 21, 1855; Logansport *Democratic Pharos*, May 19, 1858.

⁸⁹ Indianapolis *Journal*, Oct. 14, 1854.

The Democratic papers universally charged the "dark lantern party" with their defeat. As the *Sentinel* put it. "It is a Know Nothing triumph."⁹⁰

By the end of 1854 the Know Nothings had made their entry into every state of the union. In Philadelphia, Washington, D. C., St. Louis, Chicago, and the cities of Massachusetts, Ohio, and Virginia the Know Nothings won notable victories.⁹¹ In Nashville,⁹² Tennessee, and Bridgeport,⁹³ Connecticut, they elected mayors who were not even known to be in the running until after the votes were counted. In some of the old Whig strongholds of Massachusetts it was not known that a new ticket was out until the very day of the election. Their triumphs were as unexpected as they were complete.⁹⁴

The Fusionists of the state held a grand outdoor meeting, November 1, at Indianapolis in honor of their recent success. To the Old Liners it appeared as nothing but an open air meeting of the "dark lantern" party. Certain it is, that in the speeches native American sentiment was expressed as freely as anti-Nebraska. Oliver P. Morton, the mildest of all, said:

The provision of our state constitution allowing the right of suffrage to aliens is not only inexpedient but unconstitutional.⁹⁵

At a Fusion supper, the following toast was given:

The safest repository of American interests is the hearts of the American people. And the surest mode of governing America is to place her government in American hands—without the aid of foreign influence.⁹⁶

The Know Nothing state council took advantage of this gratification to hold a meeting of their own.⁹⁷ In this they followed their usual custom—whenever the People's party met, "Sam's" inner circle of friends had their own little council. The proceedings were kept secret, but it became known

⁹⁰ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Oct. 14, 1854.

⁹¹ Indianapolis *Journal*, March 31, June 13, Aug. 12, Oct. 14, 1854.

⁹² *Ibid.* Oct. 7, 1854.

⁹³ New Albany *Tribune*, Apr. 25, 1854.

⁹⁴ Indianapolis *Journal*, March 31, 1854.

⁹⁵ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Nov. 7, 1854, July 31, 1856.

⁹⁶ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, July 31, 1856.

⁹⁷ Indianapolis *Sentinel*, Nov. 3, 1854; Indianapolis *Chapman's Chanticleer*, Nov. 9, 1854.

that, after a struggle between two opposing factions, it was agreed to support Godlove S. Orth for United States senator. Also Milton Gregg, editor of the *New Albany Tribune* and a former Old Line Whig, who was now the most active advocate of nativist principles in southern Indiana, was made the nominee for the post of state printer.⁹⁸

The second national convention of the "Order of the Star Spangled Banner" met in secret session in Cincinnati, November 15, 1854. For the first time, delegates were present from all the states of the Union. The attendance was large, but there were few public men present. Among the delegates were: Kenneth Rayner, of North Carolina; John M. Clayton, of Delaware; Daniel Ullman, of New York; Jacob Broom, the leader of the former Native American party in Philadelphia; Mayor Conrad, of Philadelphia; and Sam Houston, of Texas.⁹⁹ The names of the Indiana delegates have not been learned but Rev. Samuel P. Crawford, of Indianapolis, who at this time held the office of chaplain, may have served,¹⁰⁰ and John W. Dawson, editor of the *Fort Wayne Times*, afterward acknowledged that he himself was elected as one of the delegates of this state.¹⁰¹

The business of the session was the revision of the secret ritual, but at the same time the political question was a welcome intruder.¹⁰² At this time when the old parties seemed in a process of dissolution, the Know Nothing movement was thought to be in a position to control the coming election. Several presidential possibilities, including Sam Houston, of Texas; Millard Fillmore, of New York; John M. Clayton, of Delaware; Kenneth Rayner, of North Carolina; Garrett Davis, of Kentucky; Jacob Broom, of Pennsylvania; and Daniel Ullman, of New York; most of whom were present, were considered as available candidates.¹⁰³ But the purpose was neither to make nominations nor adopt a platform.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Nov. 5, 24, 1854.

⁹⁹ *Terre Haute Wabash Courier*, Dec. 2, 1854; *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Dec. 8, 1854.

¹⁰⁰ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Sept. 18, 1854.

¹⁰¹ *Logansport Democratic Pharos*, Sept. 22, 1858.

¹⁰² Scisco, *Political Nativism in New York*, 134.

¹⁰³ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Dec. 8, 1854.

¹⁰⁴ *Indianapolis Indiana Republican*, Dec. 7, 1854.

Aside from the revision of the ritual,¹⁰⁵ and the oaths of the old degrees, the most notable news that came to the knowledge of the outside world was the adoption of the new third or "Union" degree. This degree was proposed by Kenneth Rayner, who, although a slaveholder and a believer in Southern rights, was intensely national in his sympathies. Unfolding his plan before the convention, it was received with great enthusiasm, and when a committee, of which he was chairman, reported the new degree with its oath, it was adopted by a nearly unanimous vote. The degree was conferred by Mr. Rayner on all the delegates present. It bound each member under solemn pledges to adhere to, defend, and maintain the union of the states against all assaults from every quarter without any limitations whatsoever. The recipients of this degree were welcomed into the brotherhood of the "Order of the American Union." Within six months a million and a half of men had taken the degree.¹⁰⁶

Such was the origin of the famous Union degree. After the adjournment of the convention, November 25, and the news of its work became known, a bitter protest came from the anti-slavery men. They felt that they had been sacrificed in order to gratify the demands of the pro-slavery wing.¹⁰⁷ In form the new oath merely affected to condemn any and all attempts to disrupt the nation, a sentiment to which no American could object. But in fact it gave the conservative and pro-slavery element a means of suppressing the anti-slavery agitation by using the discipline of the order against its advocates.¹⁰⁸ The immediate result in the north was the disbandment of many councils, and the withdrawal of many members of anti-slavery sentiments.¹⁰⁹ Yet there can be no doubt that the motive of the men originating the degree was pure, and there is no ground to support the "conspiracy" theory of the northern radicals, who held that the third degree was a virtual pro-slavery obligation.¹¹⁰ This move to

¹⁰⁵ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Sept. 18, 1854.

¹⁰⁶ Wilson, *Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America*, II, 420-22.

¹⁰⁷ *Indianapolis Sentinel*, Dec. 8, 1854.

¹⁰⁸ Scisco, *Political Nativism in New York*, 135.

¹⁰⁹ *Richmond Jeffersonian*, April 19, 1855; *Brookville Indiana American*, Sept. 26, 1856.

¹¹⁰ Julian, *Recollections*, 144.

gain the political support of the south marks the beginning of the disruption of the Know Nothing Party.

It is probable that a state council met in Indianapolis November 20, to receive the new ritual from Cincinnati, but the evidence is meager and no details were given out.¹¹¹

The year 1854 thus saw the entry of the Know Nothings in Indiana. The startling rapidity with which it spread, the secrecy which enveloped its action, and the phenomenal success that it achieved, made it the most powerful political organization of its day. But already it had reached its zenith. Coinciding with its period of expansion, those disruptive factors appeared which were soon to wreck and ruin it. The intrusion of the slavery issue and the contest with sectionalism will be the subject of a further chapter.

¹¹¹ The following note appeared in the Indianapolis *Sentinel* November 21, 1854: "Mr. Editor—The Know Nothings assembled in this city today from all parts of the State. At the meeting of the National Council held in Cincinnati a new ritual and formulae of the order was received by the State delegates. These documents will be distributed today.

Monday, Nov. 20.

(Signed) SAM.

This is a fair sample of the evidence upon which much of our knowledge of the Know Nothing movement rests, but as most of the *Sentinel's* Know Nothing news later proved to be true, this may be taken as fairly reliable.

(To be continued.)